

BELLEVILLE NEWS-DEMOCRAT (ILLINOIS)
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Forum

Former CIA official says we can verify treaty terms

Dear Editor,

The News-Democrat was quite correct in its recent editorial entitled, "SALT may be difficult to sell," when it said that "verification of the SALT II treaty is and should be a key issue in the Senate ratification debate."

The dangers of nuclear weapons are too great to depend on trusting the Russians. But, fortunately, we do not have to, even with the loss of our intelligence posts in Iran.

The Iran bases were important sites for collecting data on Soviet ICBMs because they were only 600 miles from their Tyuratam test launch area. But, this data was not essential for ensuring that we could carry out timely detection of the provisions of the SALT II treaty which could affect significantly our security. We have alternate redundant methods of doing this.

1. The basic SALT ceilings on strategic delivery vehicles do not rely on Iran for verification. They are monitored by reconnaissance satellites legalized and guaranteed against interference and concealment by the terms of the treaty.

2. The limits on MIRVed missiles and number of warheads per missile can be verified primarily by our extensive intelligence capabilities at the re-entry end of the Soviet test range. There we have radars, cameras, and many other sensors on land, on ships and on aircrafts which can detect, count and even weigh the incoming re-entry vehicles and warheads. The deployment phases

of MIRVs occur at such high altitudes that we can monitor this from far beyond Iran. Satellites can watch and identify the missiles as they are brought to the test launcher before firing.

3. Limits on new ballistic missiles also can be monitored satisfactorily without the Iranian posts although these would have provided us more detail and redundancy. However, the Soviets could not test a significantly new missile, as defined by the treaty, without running a very high risk of being caught.

We should replace our lost intelligence capabilities as fast as possible but satisfactory verification does not depend on this.

Such replacement would be more important in the absence of the treaty since that agreement provides many means of determining the nature and the extent of the Soviet strategic threat.

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